

VZCZCXRO6188  
PP RUEHAG RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSL  
RUEHSR  
DE RUEHAH #1052/01 2311312  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 191312Z AUG 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3323  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5562  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3281  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3146  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3805  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3816

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001052

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/19/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [AF](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF TURKMEN ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: AUGUST 12 KROL-MILES EMAIL

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Turkmen Government recognizes that it has an interest in Afghan stability. It provides humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, primarily to areas with an ethnic Turkmen population. It also delivers electricity, free of charge or on concessionary terms, and is developing the rail infrastructure to connect the two countries. International coalition forces in Afghanistan receive humanitarian overflight rights from the Turkmen, and the U.S. has a blanket humanitarian overflight agreement and a refueling operation in Ashgabat. Turkmen assistance is provided to Afghanistan through bilateral mechanisms, although it is possible that Turkmenistan could be a source for both technical experts and for the procurement of supplies for multilateral efforts in Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The Turkmen Government acknowledges its interest in the establishment of lasting peace, stability and security in its immediate neighbor and professes to support efforts of the international community in that direction. There are a series of bilateral agreements between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan outlining cooperation in commercialeconomic, fuel and energy, transport, science, education and health spheres. The Turkmen also recognize common spiritual and historical roots with the Afghans. President Berdimuhamedov has publicly announced Turkmenistan's willingness to provide the Afghan people with "support for the socioeconomic and cultural rebirth of the country."

¶3. (U) In practice, Turkmenistan provides Afghanistan with a range of humanitarian aid, including food, medicine, and electricity. A July article, prepared by the Turkmenistan Foreign Ministry's International Information Department, detailed some of that assistance. In the winter of 2007-2008, an especially harsh winter, Turkmenistan sent over USD two million in aid to northern Afghanistan, including 1,000 tons of flour, six tons of cooking oil, 500 tons of diesel fuel, 8,000 packages of winter clothing, and school supplies. In the summer of 2008, Turkmenistan provided six tons of cooking oil, six tons of foodstuffs, school supplies, and textiles. Earlier this month, First Deputy Foreign

Minister Wepa Hajiyeu went to Afghanistan to attend the openings of a Turkmen-funded, fully-equipped medical clinic in Farab province and a school in Balkh province. Turkmen humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan is focused in areas settled by its ethnic Turkmen population, which, according to Turkmen officials, numbers three million persons.

¶4. (U) Turkmenistan considers its deliveries of electricity to Afghanistan as a "substantial investment" in the country's development. In that context, Turkmenistan is expanding its network of power lines in the direction of Afghanistan, together with the installation of necessary equipment on its own territory. This included both the extension of power lines to northern areas of Afghanistan, as well as the construction of a 70-kilometer Andkhoy-Shibirgan power line that delivers power from the Turkmen power station in Mary to Mazar-i-Sharif. In 2007, Turkmenistan supplied Afghanistan with 15 million kilowatt hours of free electricity (at an estimated cost of USD 300,000) and wrote off a debt of approximately USD four million that Afghanistan had accrued by purchasing discounted electricity from Turkmenistan.

¶5. (U) Turkmenistan remains interested in improving regional infrastructure. A rail line from Serhetabat (former Gushgy) to Turgundi was recently refurbished, and the Turkmen Government plans to continue a line from Atamurat (former Kerki) into Afghanistan. In addition, Ashgabat continues to support a plan for a Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, which they view as promoting stability in the region, an economic stimulus for Afghanistan, and another export route for Turkmen gas.

ASHGABAT 00001052 002 OF 002

¶6. (C) The Turkmen Government considers itself "an important link in the framework of the activities of the international coalition" by providing an air corridor for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. It allows a limited number of humanitarian overflights by U.S. aircraft, refueling of U.S. aircraft in Ashgabat, and transshipment of fuel. Despite this limited cooperation, Turkmenistan publicly stands by its policy of "Positive Neutrality" and has refused U.S. requests to allow an increase in overflights or the ground shipment of non-lethal cargo to Afghanistan.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: As a neighbor of Afghanistan, any calculation by the Turkmen Government about its engagement with Afghanistan factors in the long-term consequences for its peaceful co-existence with whatever regime might end up in power in Kabul. They are not likely to become involved in multilateral efforts that are perceived as ineffective at delivering assistance to the Afghan people. They seem comfortable with, even proud of, their current, focused bilateral approach. Areas for expanded Turkmen involvement could be as a source for technical experts and for the procurement of supplies for multilateral efforts in Afghanistan, but probably only if such efforts coincide with their current approach. END COMMENT.  
MILES